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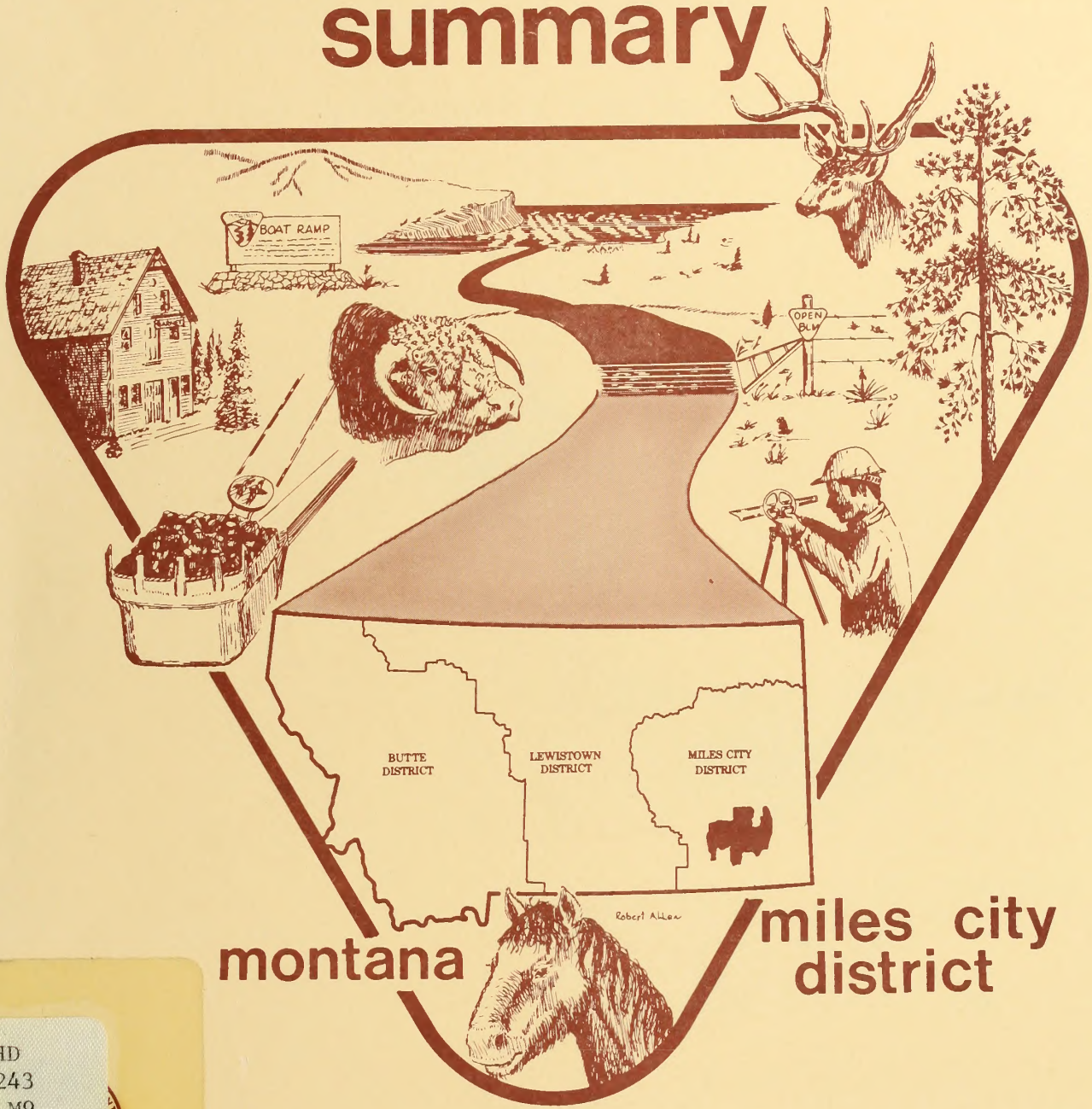
MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

summary



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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

Decker-Birney Planning Unit

July 1977

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Preface

The Bureau of Land Management's Montana State organization manages resources on almost 8.4 million acres of surface land and 55 million acres of subsurface minerals in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The Miles City BLM District Office is responsible for more than 3.5 million surface and 12.6 million subsurface acres. These public lands are used by many people for a variety of activities. It is BLM's responsibility to develop coordinated land use allocations specifying the guidelines, constraints, and criteria for the utilization or protection of the public's resources.

To better prepare for present and future demands on public lands, BLM has developed land use plans for many areas of the state. This pamphlet contains a summary of the land use decisions for the public lands in the Decker-Birney Planning Unit covering approximately 78,700 surface and 626,500 subsurface acres in Rosebud and Big Horn Counties.

These decisions were made after gathering all available resource data including the Northern Great Plains Resource Study. This information, as well as the technical expertise of BLM resource specialists, was combined and analyzed to formulate the land use decisions outlined on the following pages. By design, these decisions are flexible so they can deal with new demands or new conditions that may arise. They will be updated or revised as necessary to help keep this Management Framework Plan current and effective. Any major changes in this plan will be subject to public review and comment.

In the interest of clarity and brevity, this report is a summary document of the total planning process. The planning effort was made from 1972-1974 for the Decker-Birney Planning Unit. Specific information materials not included in this report are detailed maps, detailed physical and resource inventory data, and social and economic data. These materials, as well as the other components of BLM's land use planning process, are available for public review during regular business hours at the Miles City District Office. If you wish to review these documents, please make an appointment so we can have someone available to discuss them with you.

My staff and I thank everyone who assisted in this effort, especially those who attended our public meetings or contributed to the final product. We look forward to working with you again in formulating similar plans or updating older plans as the need arises.

George S. Nedberg
District Manager

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Introduction

A. BLM Planning System

Under the Bureau's planning system, detailed information is gathered and management decisions are developed in seven categories. These categories are lands, minerals, timber, range, watershed, wildlife habitat, and recreation. In order to meet the needs of its diverse public users, BLM must effectively balance the management of these resources. Under the concept of multiple use management, all potential uses of the public's resources are considered and evaluated before a final management plan is developed and implemented.

The Bureau of Land Management has developed its land use planning system with three major components:

Program Direction
Resource Information
Management Decisions

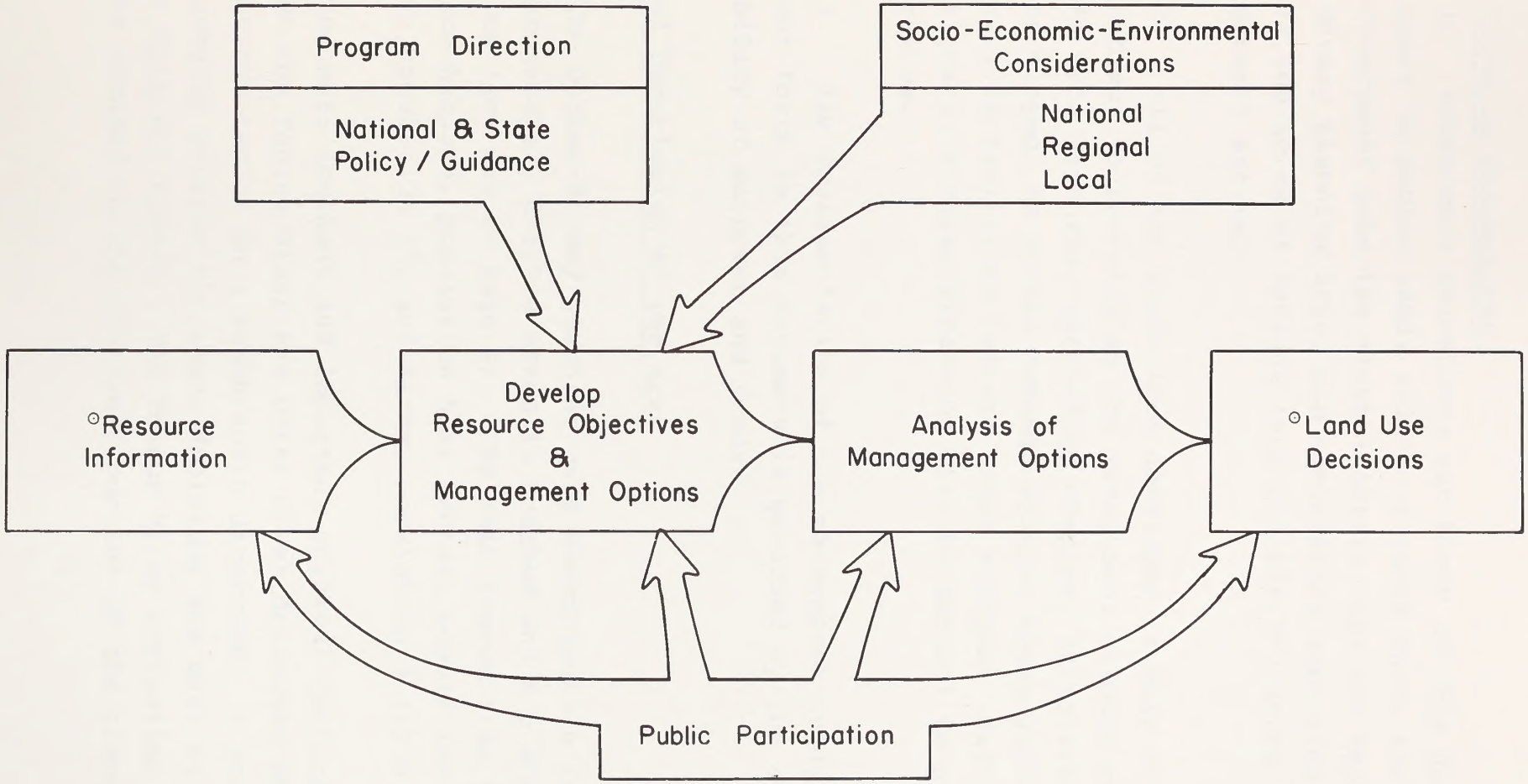
1. Program Direction. General program direction, policies, goals, and priorities are set by the President, Congress, and the Secretary of the Interior. These directions are expressed in executive orders, laws, regulations, and other documents.

2. Resource Information. In initiating this phase of the planning system, BLM specialists gather all of the available land and resource information relative to the region under study. Each resource specialist--the forester, range conservationist, minerals specialist, watershed specialist, etc.--studies the planning area to determine current condition, use, trends, and problems

concerning his resource responsibility. This analysis is then further developed to identify maximum potential for the resource use without consideration of competing or conflicting uses. The importance of this step is that each potential is considered individually. In addition, socio-economic data is gathered and analyzed and an ecological profile is prepared to facilitate the evaluation of land use alternatives generated by the planning system. In compiling the above information, the Bureau contacts traditional, as well as new interests, to be certain that all available data has been obtained.

3. Management Decisions. The next phase of the planning system is designed to resolve resource use conflicts and to provide basic guidelines for the use and management of the public lands under study. This is the heart of the planning system. At this stage, each resource specialist prepares objectives and outlines specific proposals for the optimum use of his resource based on current technology, Bureau guidelines, and the socio-economic needs of the region. Each individual resource proposal is then fully documented and individually presented utilizing a map and overlay system. At this point, conflicts between various resource proposals and possible multiple use solutions are identified through careful analysis and utilization of narratives, maps, and overlays. Based on comments and information received through public participation, BLM managers are often able to develop modified as well as additional land use alternatives and multiple use solutions. The impacts of each of these alternatives are identified and analyzed to facilitate the selection of the best mix of uses. A comprehensive land use plan is then developed and adopted. Coordinated land use allocations, guidelines, constraints, and criteria for utilization are intrinsic to this plan.

B.L.M. PLANNING SYSTEM



⊙Lands
⊙Minerals
⊙Range
⊙Recreation
⊙Watersheds
⊙Timber
⊙Wildlife

B. BLM Planning System Flowchart

B. Planning Assumptions

1. Management guidelines set forth in this document apply to public lands and those lands where the Federal Government owns the mineral estate. In the Decker-Birney planning area, BLM administers approximately 78,700 acres of surface land and 626,500 acres of mineral estate.

2. All of the guidelines developed in this study are subject to revision as the management climate changes. As data improves, technology changes, legislation is developed, or social demands change, these guidelines will be revised to reflect those changes. Major revisions in program direction will be subject to public review.

3. The implementation of the management guidelines set forth in this document is governed by the availability of manpower and funds.

General Description of the Area

The Decker-Birney planning unit encompasses a region of approximately 898,700 acres in Rosebud and Big Horn Counties (see map on page 6). The main communities in the unit are Ashland, population 531; Decker, population 30; Birney, population 13; and Kirby, population 5 (1970 Census).

The most dominant and important physical features include the Tongue River and Otter Creek drainages which dissect the region in a south/north direction. A low range of mountains between the above drainages are part of the Custer National Forest. The Tongue River Irrigation Reservoir is located in the southwest portion of the planning unit.

The major contributor to the area economy is the ranching industry. Irrigated and dryland farming commonly supplement ranch operations.

There is one strip mine in the area near Decker; however, this mine operation does not contribute significantly to the economy as it is an export operation and most of the employees live in Sheridan, Wyoming, and commute daily.

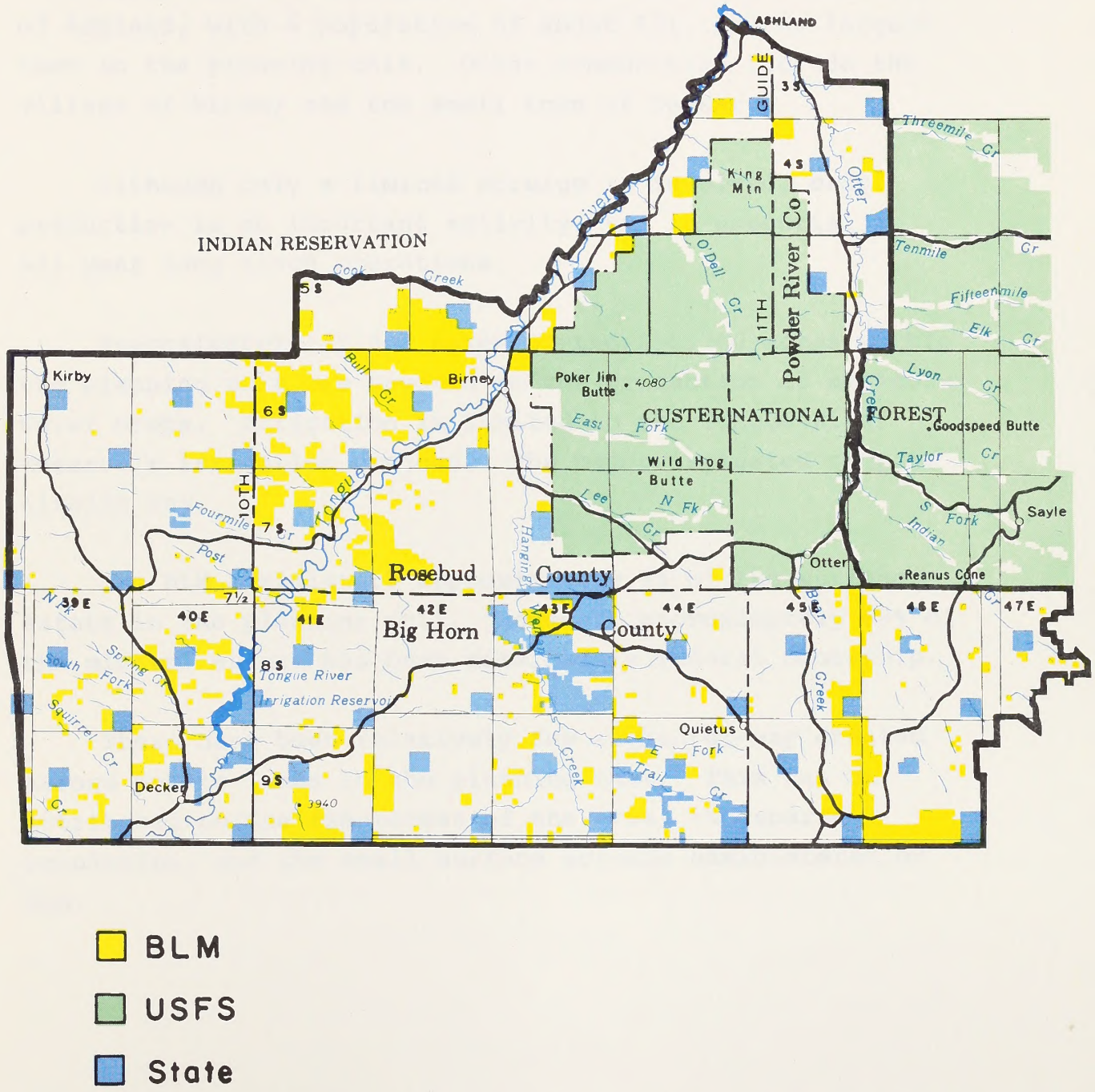
The surface ownership of the planning unit is predominately private with scattered tracts of public lands and state lands. The northeastern portion of the area is within the Custer National Forest. However, approximately 88% of the subsurface estate is in federal ownership.

OWNERSHIP AND ACREAGE STATISTICS

ACRES

	Public Lands	Forest Service	State	Private
Surface	78,700	153,500	48,000	618,500
Sursurface	626,500	162,500	48,000	61,700

DECKER - BIRNEY PLANNING UNIT



Resources Administered by BLM

A. Lands Program (Background)

BLM's Lands Program is designed to meet public needs for land and to support public land management programs.

Little urban development has occurred. The community of Ashland, with a population of about 531, is the largest town in the planning unit. Other communities include the village of Birney and the small town of Decker.

Although only a limited acreage is involved, crop production is an important activity, and is essential to all year long ranch operations.

Approximately 31,000 acres of the 898,700 acres within the planning unit are devoted to the production of agricultural crops. Irrigation is limited to the Tongue River Reservoir irrigation project. The major irrigated crop is alfalfa hay.

The BLM administers approximately 9% of the surface estate in the planning unit. However, approximately 88% of the mineral estate has been retained in federal ownership.

There have been relatively few rights-of-way granted across public lands in the planning unit. This can be attributed to the remoteness of the area, the sparse population, and the small surface acreage administered by BLM.

Lands Resource Allocation Decisions

1. Urban and Suburban Expansion Areas

   a. BLM activities will encourage, where possible, residential and commercial expansion within the unit's already established townsites.

   b. Local planning and zoning authorities will be encouraged in controlling and guiding urban and suburban growth and expansion.

2. Intensive Development Outside Urban and Suburban Expansion Areas

   a. Land needs will be considered for any residential and commercial expansion needed in association with the unit's industrial (mining) or other resource development.

   b. Transfer of public lands to private ownership in outlying areas will be restricted until local planning and zoning is complete.

   c. Further development of private agricultural lands will be promoted.

   d. Where appropriate, public lands will be made available to satisfy bona fide federal, state, and local government needs.

   e. Whenever possible, land tenure adjustments will be accomplished through exchange.

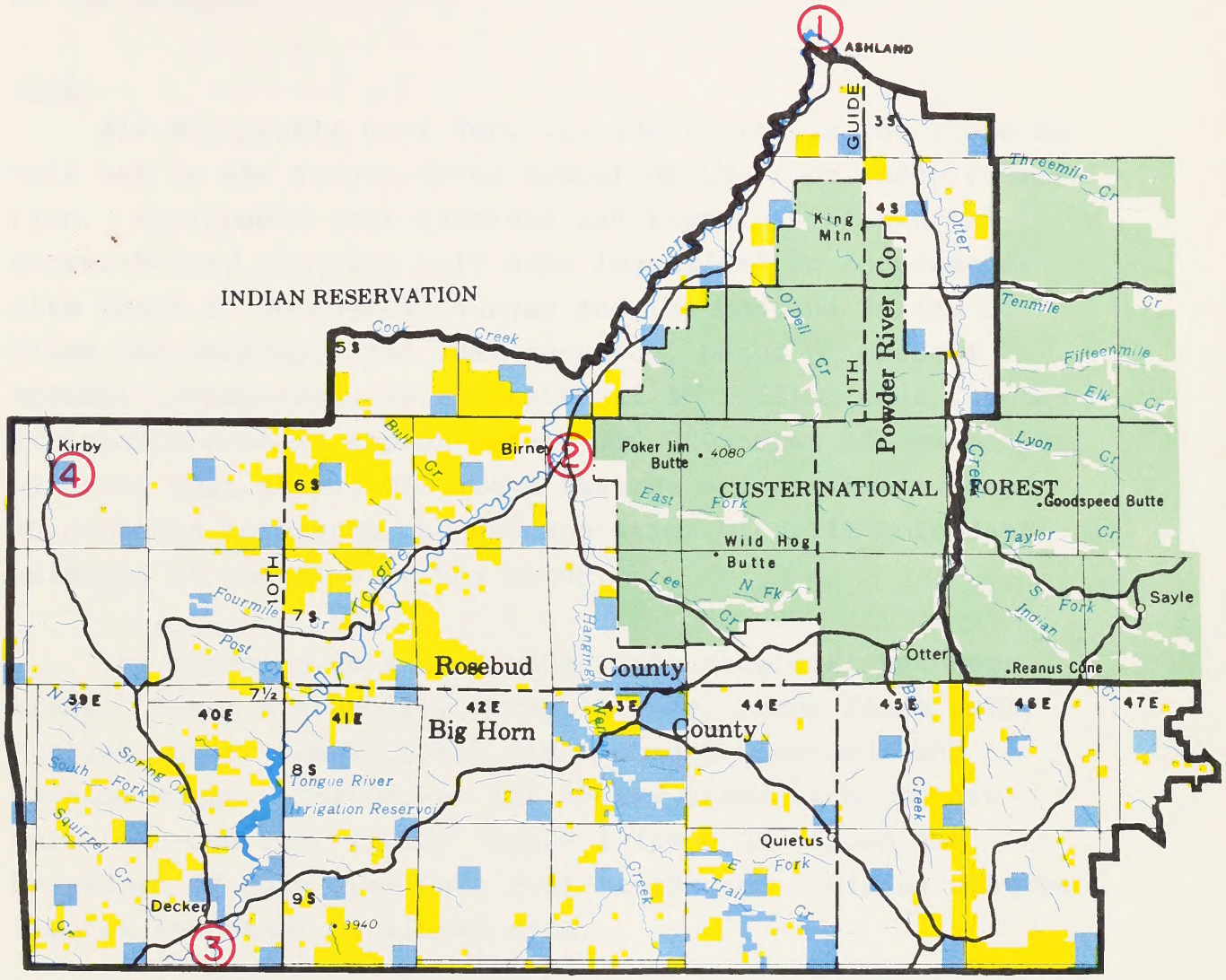
   f. Adequate signing and access acquisition will be provided for public lands.

g. Demands for rights-of-way will be satisfied with a minimum of disturbance to other resources.

h. Additional guidelines for the selection of right-of-way corridors will be developed.

DECKER - BIRNEY PLANNING UNIT

Lands Management



BLM

USFS

State

Urban and Suburban Expansion Areas

1. Ashland
2. Birney
3. Decker
4. Kirby

B. Minerals Program (Background)

BLM's minerals program includes economic analysis, appraisal, and development of the mineral resource by lease. Coordination of exploration and mining activities with other land uses, and provision for protection of the environment and rehabilitation of damage to mined lands are also integral to the problem.

Coal

All strippable coal deposits identified in the planning unit are in the Tongue River member of the Fort Union Formation. Strippable coal reserves and resources within the Decker-Birney Planning Unit were identified in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey and the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. The coal resource, based on present economic conditions, is estimated at 16 billion tons. Total strippable area is approximately 350,000 acres of 39% of the planning unit area. The above figures are estimates based on geologic inference and extrapolation of drill hole data existing at the time of the study.

The planning unit is divided into nine coal resource areas. These are Decker, Kirby, Birney, Poker Jim-O'Dell, Ashland, Otter Creek, Poker Jim Lookout, Moorhead, and Hanging Woman. The Decker and Birney areas each contain more than one coal field. Table 1 (page 15) shows the breakdown of each area into coal fields and includes reserve figures and other pertinent data.

The Decker coal field is the site of the only operating strip mine in the planning unit. The Decker mine is the largest producing coal mine in the United States, with an annual output of nearly 11 million tons. This coal is shipped by Burlington Northern through Wyoming to Illinois.

Revenues from the Decker mine are approximately $60 million with $17.4 million of that sum returning to the state by means of various taxes, including grants-to-impacted-communities.

Oil & Gas

The Decker-Birney region is underlain by thick sandstone beds in Tertiary and Cretaceous age rocks. Many of these same sedimentary units which extend across Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas are oil and gas producing. Ash Creek oil field just west of the planning unit is currently producing from the Shannon (Upper Cretaceous) sand. Bell Creek field just east of the planning unit and the Recluse field to the south (Wyoming) have been producing oil and gas from the Muddy (Lower Cretaceous) formation. The Liscom gas field north of the Decker-Birney area is producing about 2.4 million cubic feet of gas per day from the Shannon sand. On the Pumpkin Creek field to the northeast, gas has also been tapped in the Shannon formation.

Approximately 80 wells have been drilled in the unit and of these, six had poor, non-commercial shows of gas and two had poor, non-commercial shows of oil. There is no record of any shut-in or capped oil or gas wells in this planning unit.

The lack of new discoveries and low-key exploration activity present a somewhat misleading picture of the oil and gas potential in the planning unit. In comparing oil and gas exploration activity in southeastern Montana with that of Wyoming, one gets the impression oil and gas potential stops at the Wyoming border. The primary reason for this

inconsistency is the difference in the tax structure between the states. Under the present system, total Montana tax and royalties amount to about three times Wyoming's.

Indications are that the planning unit may have a significant oil and gas potential.

Sand and Gravel

Within the planning unit, superficial deposits of gravel, sand, and alluvium are found along the valleys of the Tongue River and most of the larger tributaries. Most of the sand and gravel pits are situated on private lands and are not subject to management or disposal by the Bureau of Land Management. Additionally, deposits of clinker are also located throughout the planning unit.

The largest single use for sand, gravel, and clinker within the planning unit is for road fill. The Montana Highway Department presently has three sand and gravel pits on private lands in the vicinity of Decker. Estimated cubic yards in these pits are 40,000, 80,000, and 150,000 for a total of 278,000 cubic yards.

The quantity and quality of sand and gravel are adequate to satisfy the present needs of industry and communities within the planning unit.

Mining Claims

No locatable minerals (such as gold, silver, and uranium) are known to exist within the Decker-Birney Planning Unit, although there may be some uranium potential.

Mineral Resource Allocation Decisions

1. Coal (see map on page 18)

   a. Coal leases in the least conflict areas of Otter Creek, Ashland, Morrhead, Hanging Woman, Decker, Birney, and Kirby coal fields will be considered. Table 2 (page 17) shows the acres and tons recommended to be leased and not to be leased for each coal resource area.

   b. Contract drilling programs in coal resource areas conducted in concert with appropriate state and federal agencies will be continued along with exploration licenses to private individuals or industry. Important additional data on coal and subsurface soil and water are generated from these programs.

   c. Specific lease sites for strip mining will be identified.

   d. Leasing of federal coal in flood plains will be prohibited.

   e. Coal for domestic use will be offered to individuals living in the area. A community pit will be established if sufficient interest arises.

2. Oil and Gas

   a. Oil and gas exploration will be encouraged unit wide and leases will be issued to allow development.

3. Sand, Gravel, and Clinker

   a. Sites which can feasibly be developed will be designated, and community pits established where sufficient demand exists.

Table 1

COAL FIELD STATISTICS

Area	Coal Field	Strippable Coal Bed	Thickness (Feet)	Reserves for Field (Tons)	Acreage
Decker	Decker	Anderson	14-31		
		Dietz No. 1	16-24	2,120,000,000	27,735
		Dietz No. 2	15-22		
	Roland CX and Squirrel Creek	Roland	9-13	133,000,000	7,500
	Smith Deposit	Smith	7-20.4	228,100,000	12,900
	Deer Creek	Anderson	14-31*		
		Dietz No. 1	16-24*	416,000,000	5,440
		Dietz No. 2	15-22*		
	Unnamed	Anderson & Dietz	15	326,000,000	12,300
	Roland - Deer Creek	Roland	6-13	315,000,000	17,797
Kirby	Kirby	Anderson	11-25		
		Dietz No. 1	15-30	834,000,000	15,720
		Wall	50-59		
		Canyon	23-29	250,000,000(+)	5,650(+)
Birney	Canyon Creek	Wall	20-50	1,697,000,000	24,000
		Canyon	10.2-20.8	215,000,000	7,500
	Birney	Brewster-Arnold	10-20	540,000,000	20,400

*Preliminary data taken from Decker-West Area

Table 1 Cont.

Area	Coal Field	Strippable Coal Bed	Thickness (Feet)	Reserves for Field (Tons)	Acreage
Poker Jim - O'Dell	Poker Jim - O'Dell	Knobloch	12-50	939,000,000	19,650
Ashland	Ashland	Knobloch	50-60	2,301,000,000	27,315
		Sawyer	8-12	294,000,000	27,315
Otter Creek	Otter Creek	Knobloch	21-72	1,630,000,000	31,900
Poker Jim Lookout	Poker Jim Lookout	Anderson Dietz	15-62	636,000,000	9,400
Moorhead	Moorhead	Canyon	17-25	799,230,000	
		Dietz	5-11	356,600,000	49,474
		Anderson	14-30	823,400,000	
Hanging Woman	Hanging Woman	Dietz	12-14	1,271,000,000	78,208
		Anderson	20-34	1,828,000,000	
					Subtotal

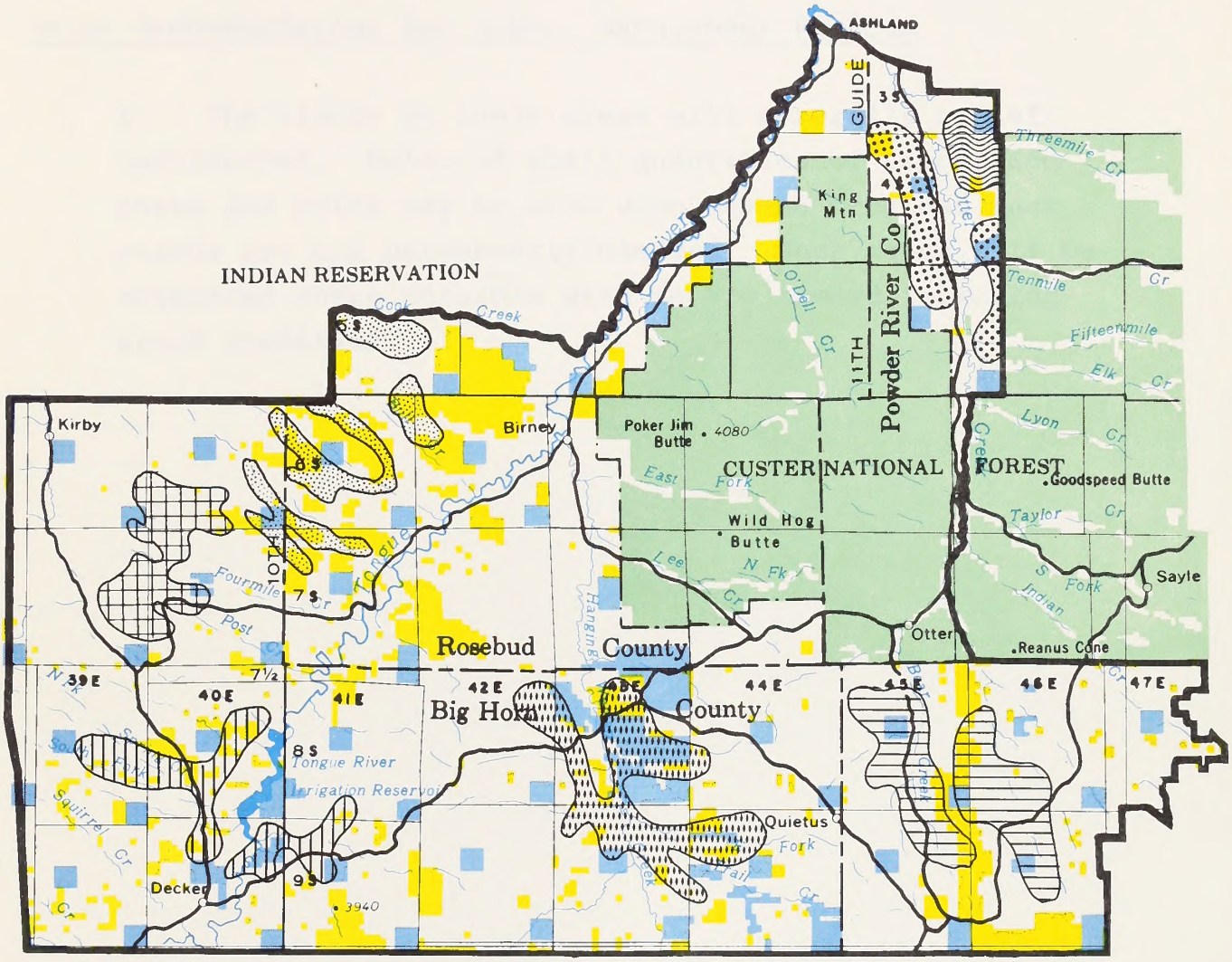
Decker-Birney Resource Area
Strippable Acreage: 413,675
Strippable Coal: 15,916,230,000 tons
Strippable Coal for Decker-Birney and Outlying Areas: 22,714,230,000
(Includes Indian lands bordering Decker-Birney Area)

TABLE 2

DECKER-BIRNEY PLANNING UNIT
MFP COAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Coal Deposit	Coal Recommended For Leasing	Coal Recommended Not To Be Leased Due To Resource Conflicts
Ashland	4,880 acres 495.3 million tons	3,120 acres 292.7 million tons
Birney	15,000 acres 1,015 million tons	12,900 acres 1,437 million tons
Decker	19,400 acres 1,488 million tons	14,220 acres 1,048 million tons
Hanging Woman	27,320 acres 1,082 million tons	50,888 acres 2,017 million tons
Kirby	11,360 acres 307 million tons	10,010 acres 777 million tons
Moorhead	27,560 acres 1,102 million tons	29,914 acres 876 million tons
Otter Creek	18,920 acres 1,193 million tons	18,530 acres 208 million tons
Poker Jim Lookout	0 0	19,609 acres 872 million tons
Poker Jim-O'Dell	0 0	19,650 acres 939 million tons
TOTAL	119,440 acres 6.6824 billion tons of strippable coal	173,841 acres 8.4667 billion tons of strippable coal

DECKER - BIRNEY
PLANNING UNIT
Mineral Management



BLM

USFS

State

Coal Lease Consideration Areas

- Ashland
- Otter Creek
- Moorhead
- Hanging Woman
- Decker
- Kirby
- Birney

C. Timber Management (Background)

The Bureau-administered forest resource on the planning unit is essentially undeveloped. There are approximately 230 scattered acres of noncommercial timber. Timber harvested on public lands to date has been limited to posts and poles and has had no commercial value as saw timber.[1/]

Major Recommendation for Timber Management Program

1. The timber on these areas will generally be left undisturbed. Sales of small quantities of timber and posts and poles may be made upon demand provided that stands are not permanently damaged. Such sales will be conducted where possible with an eye toward improving stand condition.

1/ The Unit Resource Analysis and Management Framework Plan address the entire planning unit, including the lands administered by the Custer National Forest. This summary addresses only lands administered by the BLM.

Grazing Administration

Historically, the administration of grazing use on federal lands evolved from mutual agreement between the livestock operator and local grazing administrator. The location and allocation of a particular allotment was strongly influenced by prior use.

In general, summer forage for livestock is provided from private and federal native ranges, and winter forage from high producing private lands located in close proximity to the ranch headquarters. These high producing croplands are the key to maintaining most year long operations.

Public lands in the unit are licensed or leased according to forage production of the land measured in animal unit months (AUMs). Forage production was determined in the Missouri River Basin Study.

There are no Allotment Management Plans on any BLM lands in the planning unit.

There are approximately 27,000 cattle and 2,700 sheep in the unit. About 220 families derive an income from ranching operations. There are approximately 370,000 AUMs of production capability within the planning unit. Of this, about 50,000 AUMs are produced on federal range.

Range Resource Allocation Decisions

1. The BLM cannot allow artificial treatment for increased forage production until intensive grazing management in the form of Allotment Management Plans has been implemented and an environmental statement prepared.

2. Grazing systems will be implemented on all suitable allotments, including those areas mined for coal, in order to obtain the highest livestock use compatible with other resource values.

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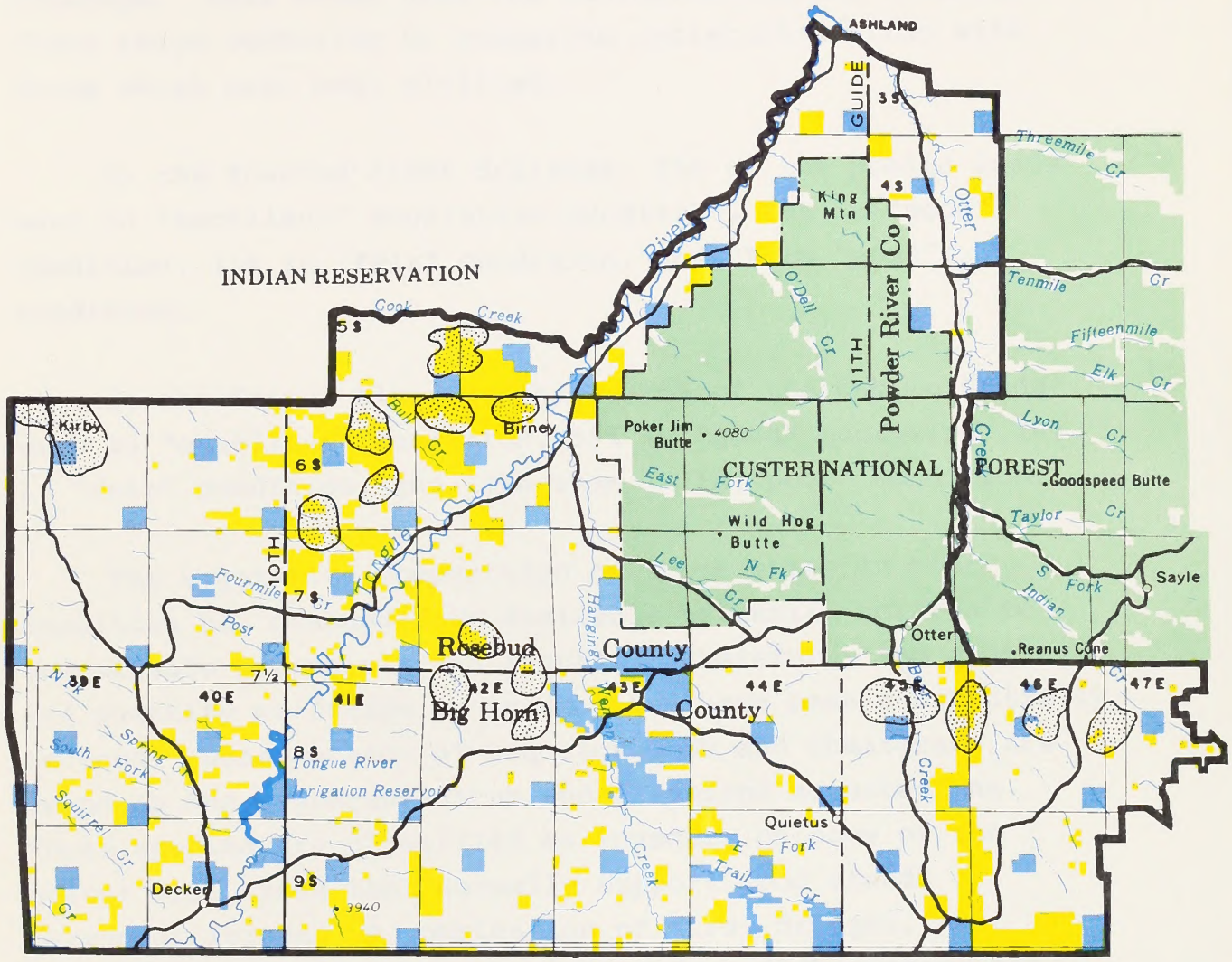
PLANNING UNIT
Timber Management



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State

Protective Management Areas

D. Range Management Program (Background)

Condition and Trend

The Missouri River Basin Studies divided the Decker-Birney Planning Unit into two general areas by drainages. These are the Rosebud Creek drainage and the Tongue River drainage. This study used the ecological method of evaluating range condition by comparing undisturbed sites with those which have been utilized.

In the Rosebud Creek drainage, 35% of the public lands were in "excellent" vegetative condition, 48% in "good" condition, 15% in "fair" condition, and 2% in "poor" condition.

In the Tongue River drainage, 25% of the public lands were in "excellent" condition, 59% in "good" condition, 16% in "fair" condition, and less than 1% in "poor" condition.

The vegetative composition on those sites in poor condition has changed from desirable perennial species to undesirable perennials and annuals. Therefore, the quality and quantity of forage on those sites have been substantially reduced. Dense stands of big sagebrush and cheatgrass are found on the sagebrush-shrub and grassland associations. These species are classified as invaders on some of the better soil types that normally support good stands of perennial forage. A combination of fire, drought, past farming practices, and concentrated livestock grazing has contributed significantly to the increase in undesirable vegetation; however, depletion of perennial ranges is attributed primarily to poor livestock management.

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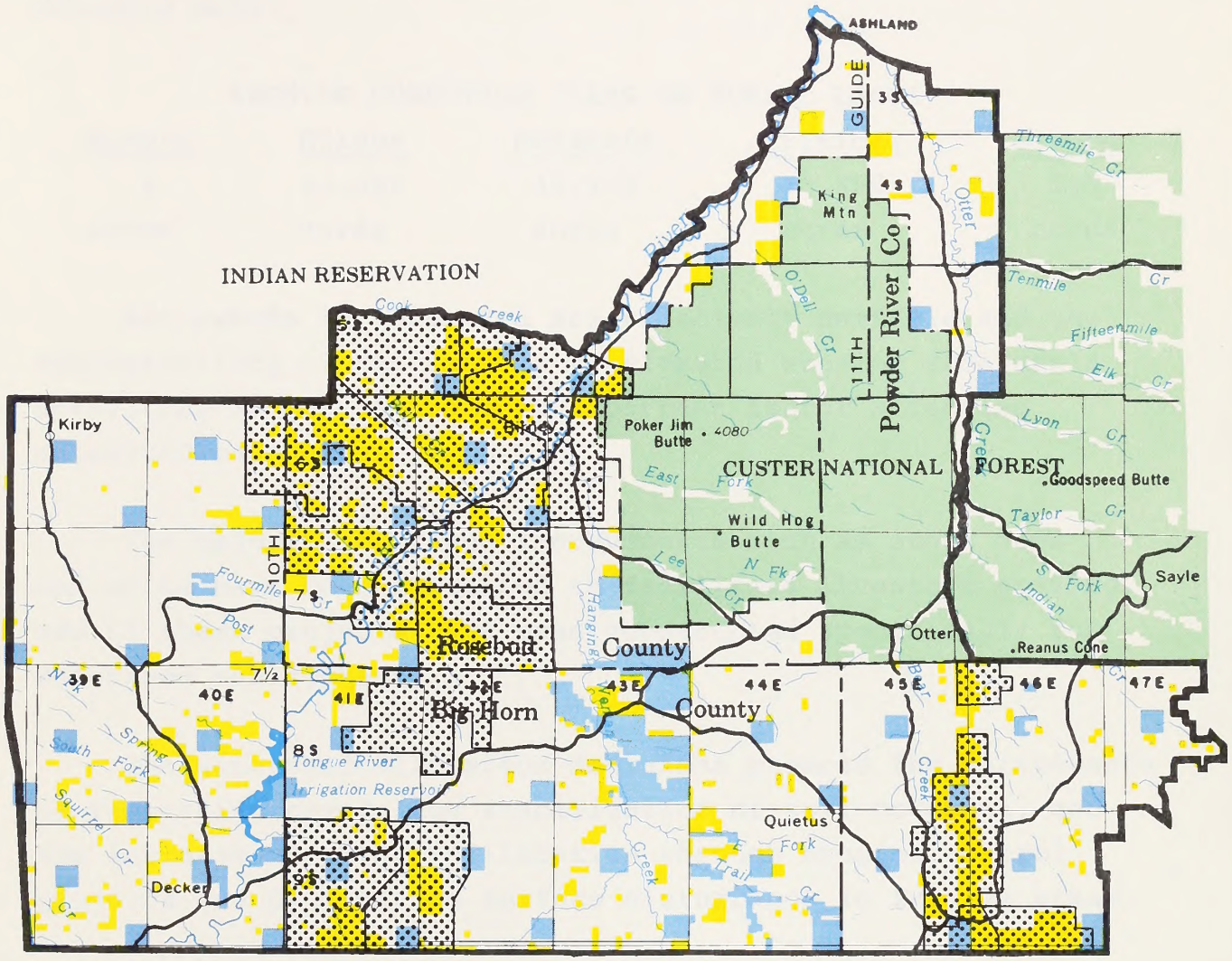
PLANNING UNIT
Range Management



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State

Areas suitable for Allotment Management Plans.

E. Watershed Program (Background)

The Bureau's watershed conservation and development system assesses watershed conditions and needs and identifies management practices to solve watershed problems.

Based on a watershed inventory, the following erosion condition classes were identified for public lands within the planning unit:

EROSION CONDITION CLASS ON PUBLIC LANDS

Stable	Slight	Moderate	Critical	Severe
0 acres	13,680 acres	45,973 acres	18,460 acres	560 acres

Watersheds in this area are relatively unstable and the susceptibility of the land to accelerated erosion from man's activities is the single most important factor affecting watershed management.

The majority of range improvements such as stock dams and wells have been installed to facilitate livestock grazing. Few of these projects have been constructed specifically for watershed enhancement.

The watershed allocation decisions promote the maintenance of vegetative cover, the stabilization of soil movement, and the increase of water infiltration through erosion control projects and by limiting surface disturbance in fragile areas.

Watershed Resource Allocation Decisions

Unit Wide

1. Where feasible, existing water developments, such as dikes and dams, will be modified to enhance watershed quality.

2. The utilization of cloud seedings, snow fences, and vegetative wind breaks to increase the amount, seasonal distribution, and quality of water produced in the planning unit will be evaluated.

Restricted Use Area, K-4

3. Restricted use areas will be inventoried to assess needs for improving and protecting water quality and associated ecosystems.

4. Where necessary, surface uses will be modified or eliminated on frail lands to improve watershed stability.

5. Where necessary to retard accelerated erosion, control structures such as retention dams will be installed on the lower reaches of drainages.

Management Area, K-5 (Zone A-3)

6. Alluvial bottoms and floodplains will be managed to maintain or improve watershed conditions. Management practices include the installation of water control structures and vegetation manipulation, where necessary, to reduce soil movement and improve water quality.

Management Area K-5 (Zone A-4)

7. The only watershed treatment for these slight erosion condition areas will be to maintain a suitable vegetative cover and maintain soil stability. In general, additional land treatment projects will not be utilized to improve watershed conditions.

Coal Lease Consideration Areas

8. Coal Lease Consideration Areas will be inventoried to determine reclamation requirements to enhance or restore watersheds to pre-mining conditions.

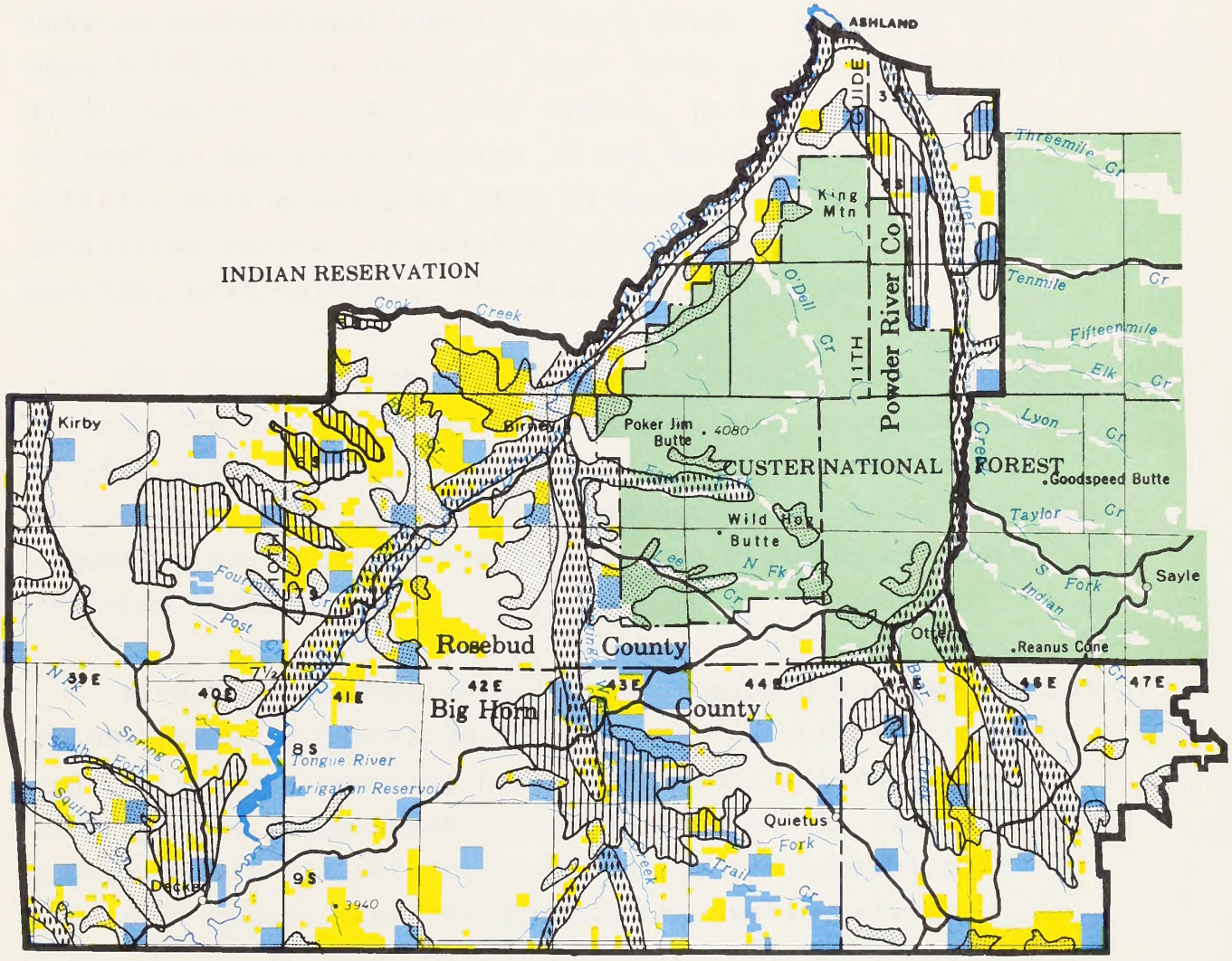
9. Strip mining may be permitted in existing critical-severe erosion areas if erosion and sedimentation can be stabilized.

10. No strip mining will be permitted in major stream channels or alluvial bottoms of the following ecosystems: grassland, pine-woodland, broadleaf, ponderosa pine, sage-shrub, and agriculture.

11. Watershed tillage practices will be applied on all strip mined areas to establish a vegetative cover.

12. All water developments will be timed in sequence with mining and reclamation plans.

DECKER - BIRNEY
PLANNING UNIT
Watershed Management



- BLM
- USFS
- State

- K-4 Restricted Use Area
- K-5 (Zone A-3) Alluvial bottoms and flood plains
- K-5 (Zone A-4) Slight erosion condition areas
- Coal lease consideration areas

F. Wildlife Habitat Management Program (Background)

BLM's wildlife program promotes effective use and management of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitats on the public lands by maintaining or improving food, cover, and living space.

The major use of wildlife in the Decker-Birney Planning Unit is recreational hunting and fishing. Annually, more than 9,600 visitor days are spent hunting and approximately 1,100 visitor days are spent fishing (a visitor day is defined as the participation of one person in a specific activity during any part of a 24-hour period). Secondary activities related to wildlife include trapping, predator hunting, bird watching, and wildlife photography.

The Decker-Birney Planning Unit includes high quality habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Approximately 899,000 acres are mule deer habitat. Mule deer winter in the rugged breaks scattered throughout the planning unit and summer at the higher elevations in the vicinity of Custer National Forest.

Riverbank vegetation along the Tongue River (approximately 55,000 acres) provides yearlong range for white-tailed deer and represents important habitat for small birds, mammals, and reptiles. The sagebrush grasslands of the plains provide approximately 524,000 acres of sage grouse habitat that includes crucial breeding grounds and nesting sites.

Approximately 139,000 acres in this planning unit is habitat for Merriams' turkeys. The turkeys utilize drainages where deciduous trees and understories of shrubs and grasses offer protection from winter weather and provide nesting cover during spring.

Ring-necked pheasants use approximately 50,000 acres of habitat in areas where native vegetation is interspersed with agricultural land.

Sharp-tailed grouse and Hungarian partridges are found scattered throughout the planning unit in grassland communities. Waterfowl, primarily puddle ducks, utilize most of the reservoirs for nesting and brooding. Birds of prey are common and numerous eagle nesting sites have been reported within the planning unit. Predators, particularly coyotes, are common and are of economic concern to local ranchers when they prey on livestock.

Several remanent populations of black-tailed prairie dogs exist in the area. The total acreage occupied by these towns is unknown. The dog towns represent potential habitat for the endangered black-footed ferret. No recent sightings of the black-footed ferret have been recorded for this planning unit.

Fish habitat exists in approximately 50 miles of stream, primarily the Tongue River. There are approximately 3,500 surface acres of additional fish habitat provided by the Tongue River Reservoir, ponds, and stockwater reservoirs.

As a result of past stocking programs, the Tongue River and Tongue River Reservoir provide fish habitat for a variety of warm water species including pike, walleye, large mouth bass, and channel catfish. At least three stockwater reservoirs have been planted with bass and two stockwater reservoirs have been planted with rainbow trout.

Wildlife habitat on public lands exists primarily in scattered tracts of land that are intermingled with privately owned surface. Because this divergent land ownership pattern makes it difficult to implement site-specific habitat management programs on public lands, the contiguous ownerships are treated as a single management unit. The resulting wildlife resource allocation decisions are designed to be broad in scope and generally do not address individual tracts of land.

Wildlife Resource Allocation Decisions

Unit Wide (except in the area of operation where surface mining is permitted in leased strippable coal resource areas)

1. Livestock grazing will be manipulated to maintain present densities and increase vigor of key browse plant species for mule deer and white-tailed deer. Streambank vegetation will be similarly managed to maintain cover requirements for white-tailed deer.

2. Livestock grazing will be managed to promote vigorous stands of shrubs in brushy coulees to meet sharp-tailed grouse food and cover requirements. Livestock grazing will also be utilized to promote an adequate perennial grass cover within a two mile radius of sharp-tailed grouse courting areas.

3. Birds of prey nesting areas and potential nest sites will be protected from destruction. Nesting areas will be protected from disturbance during the nesting season, March through July.

4. New power transmission facilities will be designed to prevent electrocution of large birds of prey, particularly eagles.

5. Land disturbance near known sharp-tailed grouse dancing grounds will be minimized April through June.

6. Habitat Management Plans will be implemented to encourage vegetation at water impoundments for waterfowl. Where suitable, future reservoirs will be developed to create or enhance waterfowl habitat.

7. All surface uses will be regulated to maintain a variety of native vegetation in all ecosystems except cultivated lands.

8. Predators will be managed for public benefit including hunting, trapping, and photography. Authorized control programs will be initiated only when the hazard to livestock and game animals justifies such action.

9. Existing black-tailed prairie dog towns will be maintained until surveyed for the presence of the black-footed ferret. Control measures will be initiated only when prairie dog damage becomes severely detrimental to other resources including livestock forage production and watershed stability.

Area A (sagebrush vegetation communities)

10. Intensive livestock grazing systems will be developed along drainage bottoms to maintain present densities and plant vigor of big and silver sagebrush. These plant species are essential for adequate antelope habitat.

11. A minimim of 20% sagebrush canopy cover will be maintained for sage grouse in those areas where this minimum exists.

12. No vegetation control programs will be permitted within a two mile radius of sage grouse strutting ground areas.

13. All livestock fences will be constructed and maintained to permit the passage of pronghorn antelope.

Area B (turkey habitat)

14. Through personal contacts, private landowners will be encouraged to maintain grain fields bordering ponderosa pine communities supportive of turkey habitat.

15. Vegetation along drainages will be managed to promote shrub understories and adequate grass cover to maintain turkey habitat.

Area C (cultivated-broadleaf types)

16. Private landowners will be encouraged to maintain croplands supportive of ring-necked pheasant and Hungarian partridge habitat. Areas where native vegetation is interspersed with agricultural lands will be protected.

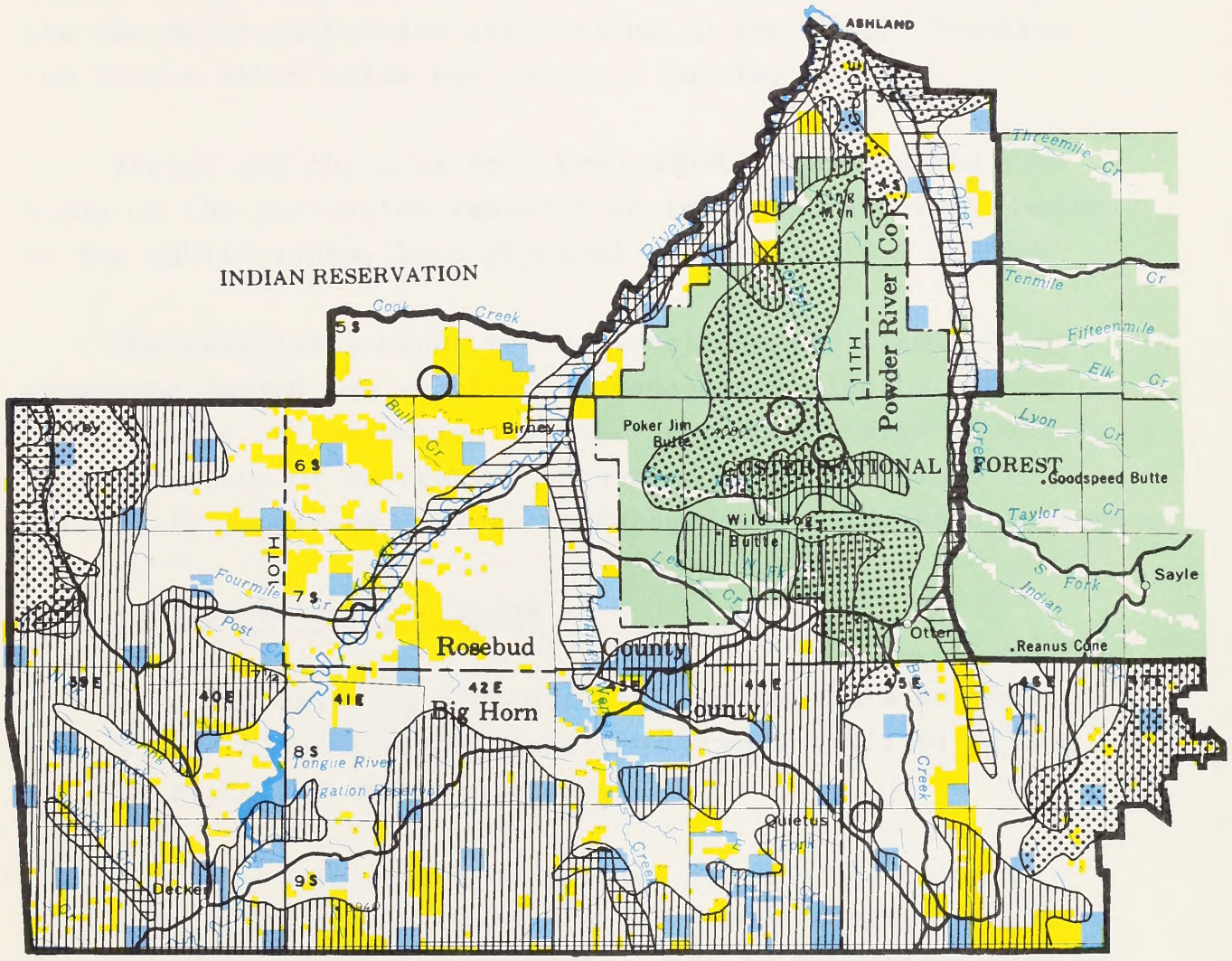
Area D (aquatic habitats)

17. The adoption of state and federal water quality standards for all waters within the planning unit to maintain aquatic ecosystems and promote good water quality will be encouraged.

18. All reservoirs on public lands will be surveyed to identify those reservoirs suitable for stocking with game fish.

19. Potential fishing access sites along the Tongue River and the Tongue River Reservoir will be identified. Where feasible, legal access to these sites will be acquired.

DECKER - BIRNEY
PLANNING UNIT
Wildlife Management



- BLM
- USFS
- State

- Area A - Sagebrush communities
- Area B - Turkey habitat
- Area C - Cultivated broadleaf types
- Area D - Aquatic habitats, designated areas and the Tongue River and Otter Creek

G. Recreation Program (Background)

There is very little data available concerning recreation use of the public lands in the planning unit. The remoteness of the area from major population centers discourages this use. The greatest recreation use is fishing and hunting mule deer, antelope, and upland game birds. The Tongue River Reservoir and the Custer National Forest lands are the major recreation attractions in the unit. Floating the Tongue River below the dam is a popular pastime.

Visual and cultural resources constitute valuable portions of the recreation resource in the unit; however, access to the public lands, both physical and legal, is a problem.

The relatively minor recreational use and little or no expressed demand has resulted in management placing a very low priority on recreation values. A comprehensive inventory and evaluation of recreation values and uses is needed to accurately determine recreation management goals and objectives.

Resource Allocation Decisions

1. The existing high quality scenic values in the scenic Class A areas (excellent scenic quality) will be protected and maintained.

2. Any development or surface disturbing activity within the scenic Class B areas (above average scenic quality) and scenic corridors will be harmonious with the existing landscape.

3. Any development or surface disturbing activity in scenic Class C areas (average scenic quality) will include all reasonable measures to minimize visual impacts.

4. Prior to any surface disturbing activities, cultural resource and paleontological inventories and evaluations will be conducted. Appropriate actions will be taken to salvage artifacts and/or modify actions to prevent loss of potential information values.

5. Off-road vehicle use on the public lands within the Restricted Use Area K-5 (see Watershed map, page 28) will be monitored and restricted or eliminated if this use is causing erosion problems.

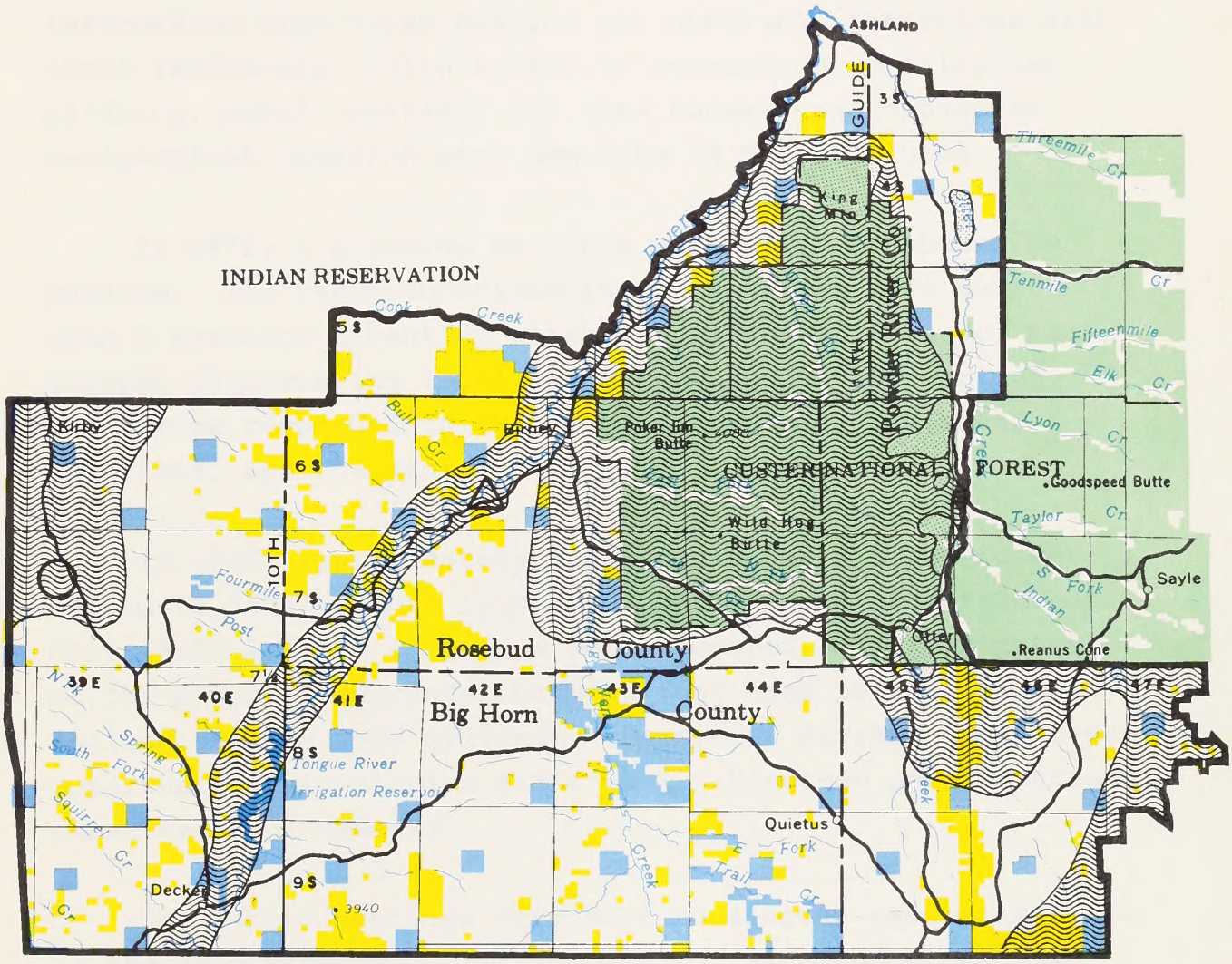
6. Legal and/or physical access to the public lands adjoining the Tongue River will be provided where feasible.

7. The integrity of the Battle Butte and Rosebud Battlefields will be preserved pending a final decision regarding state or federal acquisition for park and recreation purposes.

8. Any activities which alter the natural, free-flowing character of the Tongue River between the dam and Prairie Dog Creek will be discouraged.

DECKER - BIRNEY PLANNING UNIT

Recreation Management



- BLM
- USFS
- State

- Scenic Class A (excellent scenic quality)
- Scenic Class B (above average scenic quality)
- Rosebud Battlefield
- Battle Butte Battlefield

Public Participation in the Planning Process

Several publics have been involved in the development of the Decker-Birney management plan. Local residents, representatives of industrial development firms, university personnel, specialty groups, and other government agencies are included. The methods that have been used to gather information from these publics are diverse. Interviews with local landowners, solicitation of comments on preliminary planning, public meetings and open houses, and sponsored sociological research were employed in these efforts.

In 1972, a planning brochure was mailed to about 700 persons. The recommendations in the brochure were built upon a resource inventory which was gathered, in large part, through interviewing local ranchers. Roughly 80 persons and groups responded to this publication with comments, questions, and concerns.

In 1973, approximately 1,200 copies of a brochure were mailed to involved and interested persons and organizations. Only 15-20 written responses were received, but this stage of the planning sequence included four open houses in Sayle, Ashland, Birney, and Billings. Forty-one persons used these opportunities to examine BLM's work. Nineteen persons/groups submitted oral remarks.

Two public meetings were held to discuss recommendations in the 1974 brochure with the public. An Ashland meeting drew 181 persons while the Billings session had 158 persons in attendance. Both meetings were held after 1,500 copies of the brochure had been distributed. Twenty written comments on the recommendations were also submitted to BLM.

Because the public and BLM both recognized the need for additional attention to local residents' attitudes, two sociological research projects were sponsored during 1974 and 1975. Drs. Raymond Gold of the University of Montana and Patrick Jobes of Montana State University headed efforts to systematically assess how the persons living in the Decker-Birney area were thinking about resource issues that directly affected them. These projects, using different data collection procedures, were completed in 1975.

While public meetings, open houses, social research, written comments, and other methods differ as public involvement approaches, these efforts in the Decker-Birney area rather consistently brought similar results. Numerous issues were generated and there has been substantial variation in the public positions taken toward these issues. A summary of these positions and issues follows.

Individuals

Analysis of the written comments submitted by individuals, living inside and outside the planning unit, revealed that some persons did not agree that range conditions are deteriorating through time. The aesthetic evaluations of the area completed as part of the planning effort also drew a number of comments. Individual property rights of local landowners was a major issue throughout the planning sequence. Federal coal leasing in the unit as a recommended land use received both support and opposition. Several persons pointed out the need in 1973 for socio-economic research. BLM, the Forest Service, and state government cooperated, as a result of these statements and similar ones from other organizations, in acquiring this information. Several of the letters mailed to BLM were requests to testify at public meetings. This testimony was presented at the public meetings that were held.

The social research was confined to residents of the area. These projects revealed widespread local concern about expanded coal development. Roughly two-thirds of the local residents agreed that a moratorium on federal and state coal leasing, building of power plants, and strip mining was desirable. These studies also showed that persons living in the area are highly satisfied with it socially and environmentally. Both the social research efforts and the other public involvement processes revealed that most local residents do not desire additional outdoor recreation facilities in the area.

Industry

In 1973, the written comments submitted by industrial concerns focused upon the proposed withdrawal of federal leasing in several coal fields. Industry generally supported opening up unit-wide leasing opportunities. Groups and firms argued that the management plan decisions were unduly restrictive toward energy companies and failed to adequately respond to pressing national energy needs. Several sources stated that oil and gas activities should be promoted in the planning unit.

Specialty Groups

Several specialty groups commented in 1972 and 1973 that more studies (for instance, socio-economic, wildlife, and recreation) were needed as the planning progressed. Such studies were undertaken by BLM and other organizations and provided the additional data used in refining the multiple-use planning that followed in the Decker-Birney area. Other specialty groups noted the subjectivity of aesthetics analysis and disagreed with BLM's application of aesthetics standards. Another group strongly argued that

range conditions in the area were not declining in quality through time. Most of the comments from specialty groups were negative toward the minerals, principally coal, recommendations.

Government

Agencies at the local, state, and national level took the opportunity to comment on the management plans. Several university-based persons reviewed the plans, suggested changes, and in some cases recommended that additional research be done. These agencies and university personnel discussed the geologic, water, air quality, and wildlife data. Several sources complimented BLM on its work. Population growth in the area emerged as a concern of an agency involved with public health. Representatives of Sheridan, Wyoming, expressed concern on population growth in Sheridan as a result of expanded coal development in the Decker-Birney area. (Under such circumstances, Sheridan would be required to provide services and facilities for potential workers on the Montana side of the Montana-Wyoming border.) Other government agencies requested that they be permitted to give testimony in public meetings.

Interrelationships With Other Agencies

While compiling information that went into the development of the Management Framework Plan for the Decker-Birney Planning Unit, the BLM worked in conjunction with various government agencies, including the Forest Service and the State of Montana. This cooperation was prompted by the realization that, particularly in the case of coal, significant actions by any one owner could greatly affect the options available to others.

A complex ownership situation exists in the Decker-Birney area. The surface is largely privately-owned, although the area is intermingled with federal and state lands. The Decker-Birney area is largely underlain by federal minerals. Such an ownership situation pointed up the need for developing a single BLM framework plan into which the various land use proposals could fit, resulting in minimal conflict with other plans and owners.

An example of the interrelationship between the BLM and other government agencies is the cooperation achieved when information was sought regarding coal in the Decker-Birney area. The BLM and Forest Service made on-the-ground investigations while the State Air Quality Bureau collected air quality data. The Montana Energy Advisory Council served as contract overseer for a socio-economic analysis of the area, undertaken by Montana State University and the University of Montana.

This is an example of the coordination which was an integral part of the plan developed for the Decker-Birney area. This type of coordination is necessary since any decision that is made affects other government agencies and private landowners.

Montana BLM Organization

The Bureau's work in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota is administered from a State Office headquarters located in Billings, Montana. Within these three states, the 8.4 million surface acres and 55 million* subsurface acres of public lands are further divided administratively into four districts with District Offices in Butte, Lewistown, and Miles City, Montana; and Dickinson, North Dakota. Each district is divided into Resource Areas to facilitate day to day administration and long term management on a multiple use basis.

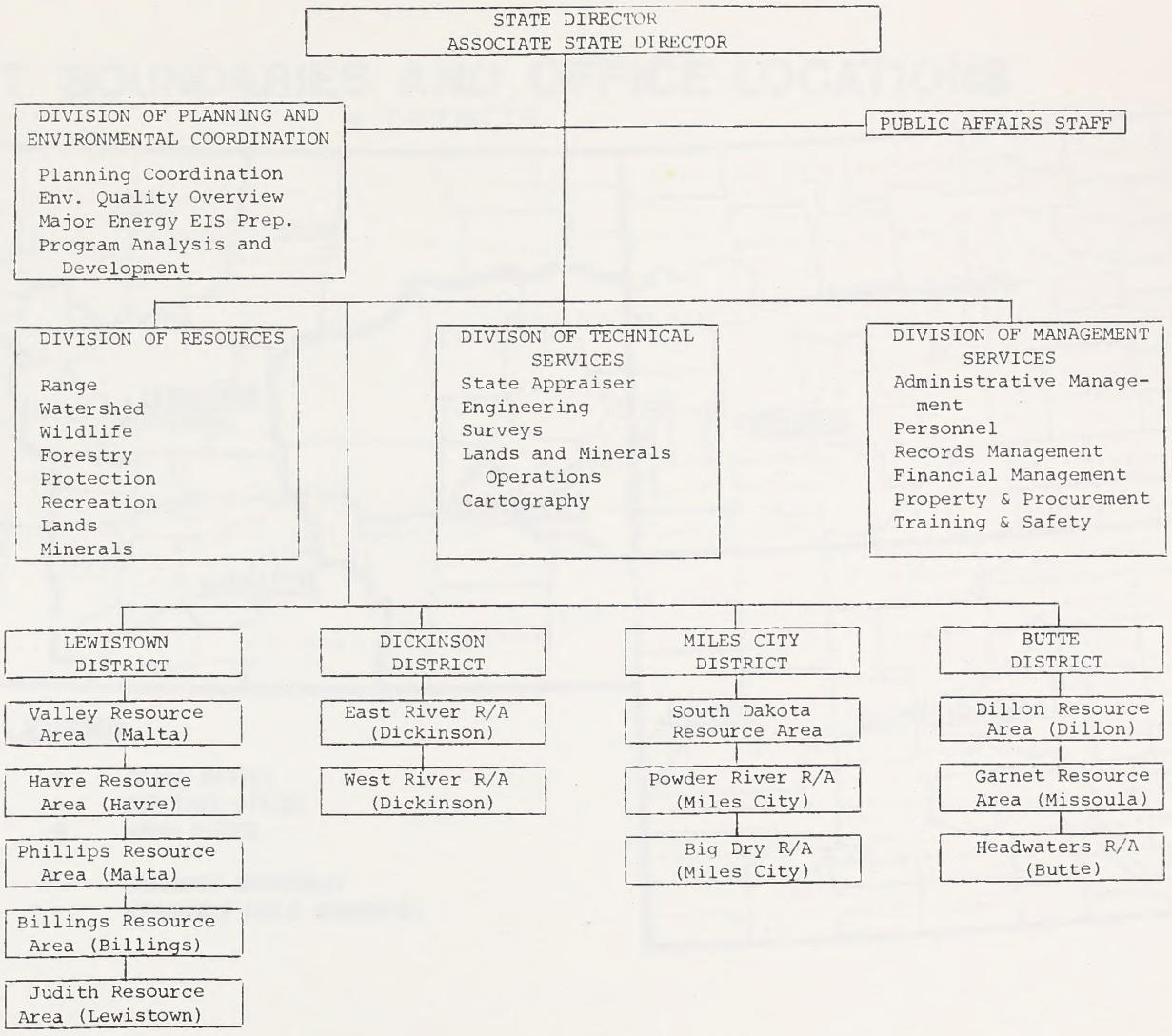
The surface and subsurface acreages administered by the four BLM Districts are noted in the table below:

Acreage Statistics
Montana BLM Organization

District	Surface Ownership		Subsurface Ownership		Total All Ownership
	BLM	Other	BLM	Other	
Butte	1,334,000	33,456,400	2,285,345	32,505,054	34,790,400
Lewistown	3,884,701	33,167,885	8,177,983	28,879,603	37,057,586
Miles City					
Montana	2,785,299	17,363,119	10,910,741	9,237,677	20,148,418
S. Dakota	276,000	48,335,200	800,000	47,811,200	48,611,200
Dickinson	68,000	44,266,720	4,968,000	39,366,720	44,334,720

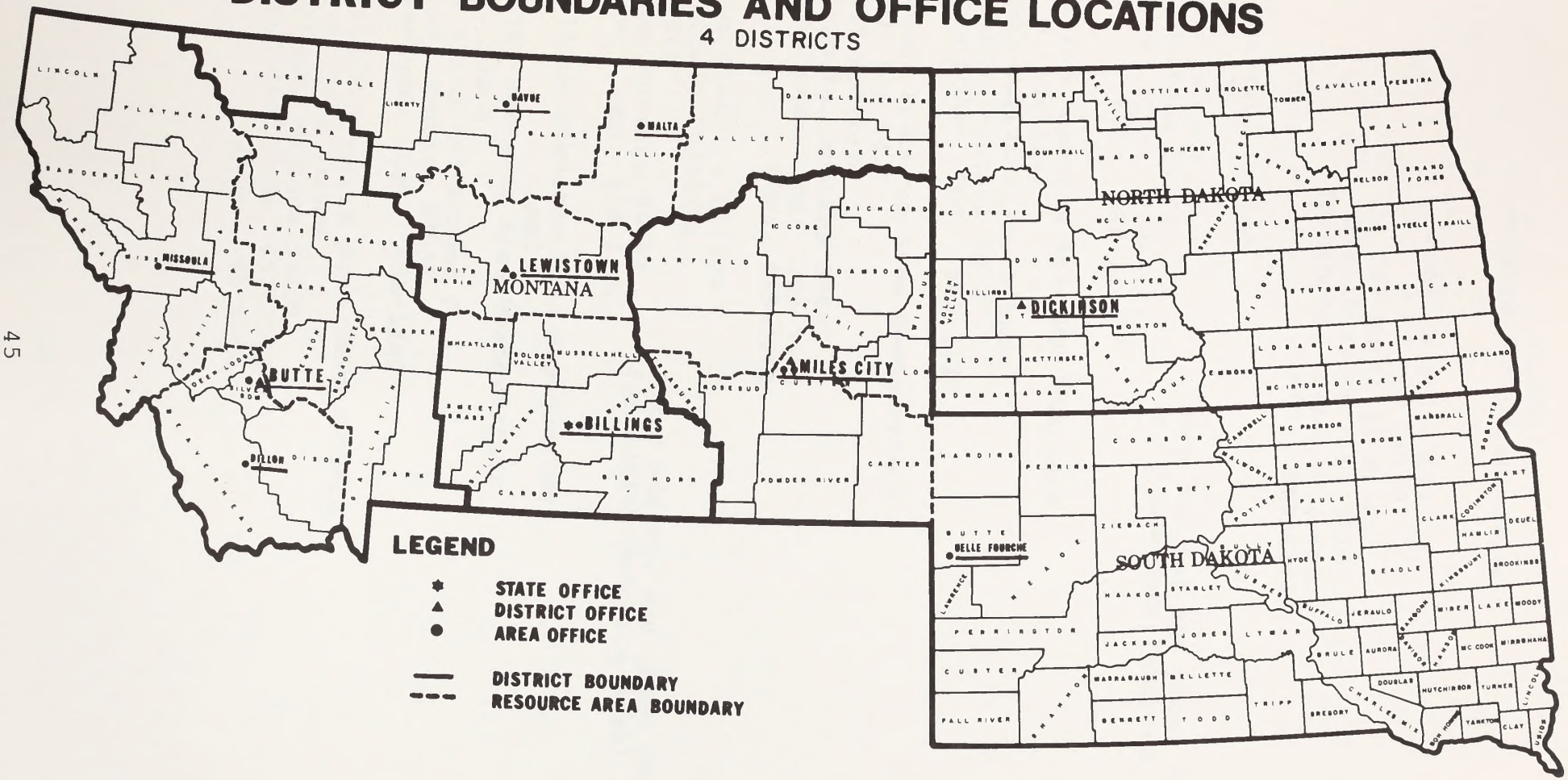
*BLM directly administers approximately 28 million acres of mineral estate and is the leasing agent for an additional 27 million acres of land administered by other federal agencies.

ORGANIZATION CHART
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT - MONTANA



DISTRICT BOUNDARIES AND OFFICE LOCATIONS

4 DISTRICTS



ADDRESSES
Montana BLM Organization

Montana State Office
P.O. Box 30157
222 North 32 Street
Billings, Montana 59101
Telephone: Com: 657-6561
FTS: 585-6561

Butte District Office
P.O. Box 308
220 North Alaska
Butte, Montana 59701
Telephone: Com: 723-6561
FTS: 585-2416

(Same address and phone number for Headwaters Resource Area)

Dillon Resource Area Headquarters
P.O. Box 1048
Ibey Building, N. Dillon
Dillon, Montana 59725
Telephone: Com: 683-2337

Garnet Resource Area Headquarters
P.O. Box 4427
1819 Holborn
Missoula, Montana 59801
Telephone: Com: 329-3686
FTS: 585-3686

Lewistown District Office
Bank Electric Building
Drawer 1160
Lewistown, Montana 59457
Telephone: Com: 538-7461

(Same address and phone number for Judith Resource Area)

Phillips Resource Area Headquarters
and
Valley Resource Area Headquarters
P.O. Box B
501 South 2nd Street E
Malta, Montana 59538
Telephone: Com: 654-1240

Billings Resource Area Headquarters
810 E. Main Street
Billings, Montana 59101
Telephone: Com: 657-6262
FTS: 585-6262

Havre Resource Area Headquarters
Post Office Building
Drawer 911
Havre, Montana 59501
Telephone: Com: 265-5891

Miles City District Office
P.O. Box 940
West of Miles City
Miles City, Montana 59301
Telephone: Com: 232-4331

(Same address and phone number for Powder River and Big Dry Resource Areas)

South Dakota Resource Area Headquarters
310 Roundup Street
Belle Fourche, South Dakota 57717
Telephone: Com: 892-2526

Dickinson District Office
P.O. Box 1229
Pulver Hall
Dickinson, North Dakota 58601
Telephone: Com: 225-9148

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Form 1279-3
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